

## Second Sunday of Lent – March 12, 2017 – Good Shepherd Parish

### Scripture Reading: Genesis 12:1-4a

The LORD said to Abram: "Go forth from the land of your kinsfolk and from your father's house to a land that I will show you.

"I will make of you a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you  
and curse those who curse you.

All the communities of the earth  
shall find blessing in you."

Abram went as the LORD directed him.

### Psalm: Ps 33:4-5, 18-19, 20, 22

R. (22) Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Upright is the word of the LORD,  
and all his works are trustworthy.

He loves justice and right;  
of the kindness of the LORD the earth is full.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

See, the eyes of the LORD are upon those who fear him,

upon those who hope for his kindness,  
to deliver them from death  
and preserve them in spite of famine.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Our soul waits for the LORD,  
who is our help and our shield.

May your kindness, O LORD, be upon us  
who have put our hope in you.

R. Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

### Scripture Reading: 2 Timothy 1:8b-10

Beloved: Bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. He saved us and called us to a holy life, not according to our works but according to his own design and the grace bestowed on us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now made manifest through the appearance of our savior Christ Jesus, who destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

### Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9

Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them; his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, conversing with him. Then Peter said to Jesus in reply, "Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud cast a shadow over them, then from the cloud came a voice that said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." When the disciples heard this, they fell prostrate and were very much afraid. But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and do not be afraid." And when the disciples raised their eyes, they saw no one else but Jesus alone.

As they were coming down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, "Do not tell the vision to anyone until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."



### Prayer for a New Bishop

Heavenly Father,

You have blessed our diocese time and again with good and holy bishops who have led us ever closer to you. Aware of your profound love for us, we ask you to bless us once again. Send us a good and holy man to become our next bishop. Inspire us, the clergy, religious and the laity of the diocese to work generously with him so that we might grow together in your love and continue the good work you have begun in us for the sake of all. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

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### **INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God.*

#### **Proclaim the Scriptures out loud.**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

### **INVITATION TO REFLECT**

Last week we saw Jesus being tempted like the rest of us. It was so human. But this week we see him transformed into dazzling white light! Not so human. What is going on? I want to describe an Ignatian prayer experience that could shed some light on this “Transfiguration.” Stay with me on this. Imagine yourself sad and discouraged, wishing God would help you. You want your faith back, which used to be strong. But now you do not find it. You go along in your normal patterns. Now, suppose that all at once you find yourself moved and attracted to God in a way you cannot doubt, a way that is beyond you but also within you. After the experience, you cannot really doubt that the occurrence is from God, even though you do not really understand it.\* This would be an important moment, wouldn't it—a transformation (though brief) of your experience of God, a reshaping of it.

#### **Suffering, death and resurrection at the heart of love!**

In such a prayer, unusual as it is, God gives us a brief vision of how reality is at its core, impossible to describe here. But maybe the retreat experience is to keep us from getting discouraged, or letting our attention drift away while he is teaching us. So apply such an experience to the scene of Jesus' Transfiguration in Sunday's Gospel. The apostles suddenly behold Jesus with his divinity shining forth. It shows through their blinders (and frightens them). Their experience of Jesus is transfigured. For a moment they see Jesus in the complete union with God that he is. Notice that I said, “in the complete union with the God that he *is*,” not a union that he “*has*.” In Jesus, divinity and humanity are together in one person. Daily onlookers saw only the human, but in this passage, Jesus is showing the apostles his whole self, divinity in its complete presence within its humanity. Why such a sudden revelation to them?

Possibly this scene is just one stage of the instruction he had been giving to the apostles throughout the whole Gospel. Just before our passage he had finally taught them what a real Messiah is. He said that the “Son of the living God” (or in other words, the Messiah) “must go to Jerusalem and suffer greatly from the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed and on the third day be raised” (Mt 16:13-23): a shocking revelation for the apostles, and for us too. Peter objected vehemently, which proved his shock, taking Jesus aside and rebuking him. “God forbid, Lord! No such thing shall ever happen to you.” Maybe that is your reaction, too, and mine as well! Jesus responds. He goes so far as to call Peter “Satan” for resisting the new revelation. Suffering and death are not foreign to Jesus, the Messiah. They are of the essence. Such a hard lesson this is for each of us. Suffering, death and resurrection at the heart of love! I suppose the Transfiguration was the way for Jesus to reassure them and us that such awful sounding things actually fulfill his divinity. They are God's love shining forth. How many of us have time to even think of such a miracle, such a transfiguration? Go and pray.

### **INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

1. What was Abraham's response to God's request? Does this incident relate to your Lenten experience in any way? How? God called Abraham out of his homeland to start something new. Does God sometimes call you out of your comfort zone or your favorite chair to start something new?
2. In this reading what does St. Paul specify that saves us, grace and/or our works? Or could it be that both count? Notice where he says, “Bear your share of hardship for the Gospel with the strength that comes from God.”?
3. In his Transfiguration, Jesus invited three of his disciples (and us) to gaze at him. Do you ask yourself every night when you saw Jesus during the day?

### **INVITATION TO ACT**

Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.

### **CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another's openness and sensitivity. Conclude with the following:

O God, who have commanded us to listen to your beloved Son, be pleased, we pray, to nourish us inwardly by your word, that, with spiritual sight made pure, we may rejoice to behold your glory. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. Amen